

## **A Proposal to enhance the South East Queensland Rail Freight Network**

A submission to the "Inquiry into integration of regional rail and road networks and their interface with ports."

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Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Transport and Regional Services  
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While King & Co is pleased to see rail freight playing an increased role in the State Government's SEQ Regional and Infrastructure Plans, and that Queensland Transport has finally embarked on a much needed Brisbane Rail Network Capacity Study, there are some issues of track placement and upgrade that must also be considered before this form of goods transport can reach its full potential, particularly in light of an anticipated Inland Rail linking Melbourne and Darwin via NSW and Queensland.

With this in mind, we'd like to offer some concrete proposals designed to complement current and projected rail projects, most importantly the need for additional standard gauge freight rail links, and the additional nodes to service them.

**A. From the NSW border to Larapinta at the junction of the Logan Motorway:**

- i. There appears to be little sense in developing Bromleton, as there is no infrastructure other than the standard gauge line and the geography would seem to limit practical options.
- ii. While the proposed Federal Government's \$700 million interstate line upgrade is aimed at northern NSW, its interest should be promoted to continue this upgrade to north of and beyond the border for freight and passenger use. The State should ensure a wide enough corridor is available for this work as well as providing adequate grade separations and crossing loops between passenger and freight tracks.

## **B. From Larapinta to Murarrie - paralleling the Logan Motorway and Gateway Arterial - about 12km**

The most pressing need is to move freight to and from the Port and to alleviate its existing movement through the City. Tracks may be contained within and lower than these two-way roads, with noise minimised by existing baffles. As the corridor is already owned by the State, this project could be undertaken while the Gateway Arterial is being upgraded. The junction at Larapinta should be planned and installed at the same time as Paradise Road junction is connected to the Logan Motorway. These connections should provide for double stacked container rolling stock.

## **C. From Murarrie to the Port of Brisbane - about 6 km**

This section is already in place and while a major junction is required at Murarrie, it could be incorporated at the same time as the Gateway Arterial upgrade and the Port of Brisbane's 283 hectare reclamation project are underway. Needless to say this would enhance the Port as a major freight node, especially in regards to container movement.

## **D. From Larapinta to Purga - about 20 km**

This section would see the line continue west along the Logan Motorway, then travel parallel to the south-west arterial road through Springfield, Ripley to Purga, the latter being a mostly Commonwealth owned portion of land which has become the Government's preferred site for a multi modal (truck/train) marshalling yard because of its ideal location near some of SE Queensland's most significant future industrial areas, including a large, vacant level parcel of land available adjacent to the Cunningham Highway, the newly acquired 183 hectare State Government land abutting Amberley air base, which is earmarked for the aviation industry, the 56.11km<sup>2</sup> Ebenezer Industrial Park at Willowbank, the 27.6 km<sup>2</sup> Swanbank Enterprise Park and the 315ha Bremer Business Park in Bundamba. Importantly, it also offers a relatively flat topography and could accommodate the multiple 2km sidings that are required by long distance freight trains. Should this eventuate, Purga would undoubtedly become the most important inter and intra state rail freight node in southeast Queensland.

### **E. From Purga to Rosewood - about 4km**

This section would be necessary to connect to the Toowoomba line at the time of construction of the Inland Rail. It could well be required before the Larapinta to Purga line is built. Meanwhile, rail spurs to Ebenezer can start from here.

### **F. Rosewood to West of Toowoomba**

This section would be in combination with a freight node just west of Toowoomba, which should provide for 2km long sidings and allow for any extension of the Inland Rail line north to Gladstone (sometimes preferred as a rail terminus instead of Brisbane), Townsville and/or Darwin. Part of the link would be via a sloping, 6km long tunnel bypass through Toowoomba that would best serve its function if constructed with separate standard gauge tracks for passenger and freight traffic. Tunnel diameter should also be at least 7.2m if it's to accommodate double stacked containers, a feature that would keep this mode competitive against trucks.

**For a more visual overview of these links see the relevant map**

Meanwhile, there's a number of additional observations and suggestions to be made relating to SE Queensland's rail freight needs including:

\*The limitation of existing standard gauge along the eastern seaboard restricts rail freight to about 17% of all freight movements. In comparison, the standard gauge rail between Sydney and Perth moves 70% of freight.

\*Although South East Queensland's rail network would be best served by dual lines of track comprising narrow gauge for passenger and standard gauge for freight, slower economic growth or funding constraints may result in initial installation of single line dual gauge tracks.

\*Conversion of tracks to standard gauge, or at least dual gauge, is the minimum needed to carry trains with the 20 tonne axle loads required for profitability.

\*The legality of seamless interstate standard gauge rail network has been theoretically possible since 1997 as per the Inter Government Agreement-Australia Rail Track Corporation Agreement.

\*Without dedicated tracks during peak periods freight users lose 6 hours a day in travel time just to accommodate passenger trains.

\*Currently a standard gauge rail line flows from NSW border through Bromelton, just west of Beaudesert to Acacia Ridge marshalling yards, then via dual gauge line to Fisherman Islands at the Port of Brisbane, and also to Roma Street, Brisbane.

\*While trucking is a cost effective mode of freight transport for shorter to medium distances, anything longer sees the rail option beat it by as much as double, albeit with longer line haul transit times. Rail infrastructure also tends to be less expensive to build or maintain during the lifetime of its functionality.

\*Increased reliance on rail for long haulage will take a sizeable portion of Brisbane, Port or Sydney bound trucks off suburban roads and should, for example, relieve traffic congestion along the Brisbane Urban Corridor and Ipswich Road. Not only would this lessen commuter angst but might also go a long way in appeasing residential communities intent on forcing the relocation of venerable, truck dependent industrial suburbs like Darra, Rocklea, Acacia Ridge and Salisbury.

\*Additional marshalling yard space is needed on the southside to break up rail traffic into separate Brisbane and north coast destinations, something that would give the ability to better schedule services over 24 hour periods. This could be accomplished by expanding the Acacia Ridge yard, using land strategically bought around the area by Pacific National and its competitor Queensland Rail...at least after they resolve their legal problems. Or it could be located elsewhere in Acacia Ridge. Should that not be possible, Purga is also an option that must be considered if the Inland Rail comes on line first

\*It's critical that rail sidings be of adequate length (at least 2,000m long for north south freight trains and 1,500m for east west). Anything less will limit a trains carrying capacity and, therefore, profitability.

\*More money is needed from the Commonwealth's Auslink program, which purports to adequately fund the national rail freight system as an alternative to roads but doesn't seem to be up to releasing the necessary dollars, a case in point being the inadequate amount given to upgrade signalling from Casino to Acacia Ridge or provide more crossing loops in response to increased rail traffic. Auslink also fell \$25 million short in the money required to build a grade separation at the Beaudesert Road exit from the Acacia Ridge marshalling yards. Presently Pacific National trains going south during the afternoon at peak hour cause 15 minute traffic delays because they're forced to pull out at such slow speeds.

\*Decide now what land is needed for future rail corridors, even 50 years hence, then secure this property as soon as possible eg land for a western bypass from Toowoomba to Grandchester as part of the Inland Rail's second crossing, or the land that will be needed if there's going to be a standard gauge rail corridor to Beaudesert (or Bromelton in the much longer term). Similarly the Government must annex sufficiently wide corridors to either side of the tracks must be planned and acquired for eventual separation of freight and passenger rail services as well a buffers between rail and residents.

\*While in some cases there's been a community reaction to potential noise at mooted rail over/underpasses, many of these concerns could be overcome by using cut and cover tunnels, lowered ramping (ie "furrows") and/or 4m high sound barriers.

\*Prior to the above noted SEQ Regional and Infrastructure Plans, or the as yet unfinished Queensland Transport study, there's been numerous Government investigations undertaken and papers delivered that also purport to offer sensible strategies that facilitate a more efficient interstate rail freight sector, the last one of note being 2001's seemingly unimplemented Rail Network Strategy for Queensland. Looking at them sitting in front of me, figuratively stacked to the ceiling, to what extent can we possibly trust that present efforts will reach any different end?

That being said, we, like many others interested in this subject, feel an optimism unknown just a few years ago, possibly because the State Government has become more proactive, maybe because the public's now ready to dig into their pockets to pay for what's required, and most likely because there's really no choice if our bit of the world is to thrive economically. Anyway, whatever eventuates won't be from our lack of input.

